CHAPTER V

REUNION AND RENEWED ADVANCE. THE SUI (AJ>. 589-618) AND TANG (A.D. 618-907) DYNASTIES

INTRODUCTORY

THE prolonged disunion and internal and external weakness had at last come to an end. There now followed one of the most brilliant periods in the entire history of China. United politically, the Middle Kingdom entered upon renewed prosperity and expanded her borders farther even than under the Han. In the seventh and eighth centuries China was one of the most extensive and powerful states on the planet. Prosperous, her population increased and with it her commerce. Peoples all over the East of Asia were dazzled by her might and her culture and attempted to learn from her.

Under the Sui and the T'ang, moreover, China registered fresh advances in civilization. Originality in political thought, although by no means absent, was not so marked as in the later years of the Chou, and the dynasties produced no innovating administrative genius equal to those of the Ch'in and the Han, While in political theory and governmental organization the Sui and the Tang were content to build upon foundations laid in the past, they showed skill in utilizing the principles and framework which they had inherited from the Chou, the Ch'in, and the Han. Never after the Sui and the T'ang was China to have such prolonged disunion and near-anarchy as preceded them, and it

may well be—
although it cannot certainly be demonstrated—that this was due
to the effectiveness with which their statesmen did their work. In
the realm of the aesthetic, moreover, especially in art and in po-
etry, the China of the T'ang displayed creativeness and attained
a level previously never approached. In the last years of the pe-
riod of disunion, under the Sui, and during the most prosperous